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April Fools' Day



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"April Fool" redirects here. For other uses, see [April Fool \(disambiguation\)](#).

This article is about the informal holiday. For other uses, see [April Fool's Day \(disambiguation\)](#).

April Fools' Day (alternatively **April Fool's Day**, sometimes **All Fools' Day**) is celebrated on 1 April every year. 1 April is not a [national holiday](#), but is widely recognized and celebrated in various countries as a day when people play [practical jokes](#) and [hoaxes](#) on each other called *April fools*.^[1]

In [Italy](#), [France](#) and [Belgium](#), children and adults traditionally tack paper fishes on each other's back as a trick and shout "April fish!" in their local languages (*pesce d'aprile!*, *poisson d'avril!* and *aprilvis!* in [Italian](#), [French](#) and [Flemish](#), respectively).^[*citation needed*] Such fish feature prominently on many late 19th- to early 20th-century French April Fools' Day postcards.

The earliest recorded association between 1 April and foolishness is an ambiguous reference in [Chaucer's](#) *Canterbury Tales* (1392).^[*citation needed*] Many writers^[*who?*] suggest that the restoration of 1 January by [Pope Gregory XIII](#) as [New Year's Day](#) of the [Gregorian Calendar](#) in the 16th century was responsible for the creation of the holiday, sometimes questioned for earlier references.^[*citation needed*]

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Origins [edit]

Precursors of April Fools' Day include the Roman festival of [Hilaria](#), held 25 March,^[2] and the Medieval [Feast of Fools](#), held 28 December,^[3] still a day on which pranks are played in Spanish-speaking countries.

April Fools' Day



An "April Fools' Day" hoax marking the construction of the [Copenhagen Metro](#) in 2001

Also called	All Fools' Day
Type	Cultural, Western
Significance	Practical pranks
Observances	Humour
Date	1 April
Next time	1 April 2014
Frequency	annual

Italiano



Basa Jawa

Қазақша

Latina

Latviešu

Lëtzebuergesch

Lietuvių

Magyar



Bahasa Melayu



Nederlands



Norsk bokmål

Norsk nynorsk

O zбекcha

Polski

Português

Română

Русский

Scots

Shqip

Simple English

Slovenščina

Српски / srpski

Suomi

Svenska



Татарча/tatarça



Türkçe

Українська



Tiếng Việt

Walon



Edit links

In Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* (1392), the "[Nun's Priest's Tale](#)" is set *Syn March bigan thritty dayes and two*.^[4]^[5] Modern scholars believe that there is a copying error in the extant manuscripts and that Chaucer actually wrote, *Syn March was gon*.^[6] Thus, the passage originally meant 32 days after April, i.e. 2 May,^[7] the anniversary of the engagement of King [Richard II of England](#) to [Anne of Bohemia](#), which took place in 1381. Readers apparently misunderstood this line to mean "March 32", i.e. 1 April.^[8] In Chaucer's tale, the vain cock Chauntecleer is tricked by a fox.



In 1508, French poet [Eloy d'Amerval](#) referred to a *poisson d'avril* (April fool, literally "April fish"), a possible reference to the holiday.^[9] In 1539, Flemish poet Eduard de Dene wrote of a nobleman who sent his servants on foolish errands on 1 April.^[7] In 1686, [John Aubrey](#) referred to the holiday as "Fool's holy day", the first British reference.^[7] On 1 April 1698, several people were tricked into going to the [Tower of London](#) to "see the Lions washed".^[7]

In the Middle Ages, up until the late 18th century, New Year's Day was celebrated on 25 March ([Feast of the Annunciation](#)) in most European towns.^[10] In some areas of France, New Year's was a week-long holiday ending on 1 April.^[2]^[3] Many writers suggest that April Fools originated because those who celebrated on 1 January made fun of those who celebrated on other dates.^[2] The use of 1 January as New Year's Day was common in France by the mid-16th century,^[7] and this date was adopted officially in 1564 by the [Edict of Roussillon](#).

Longstanding customs [\[edit\]](#)



An April Fools' Day prank with a purported new design of an (alleged) city bus, from an April 1926 issue of the company newspaper "Echo Continental", published by the Continental Rubber Works Hannover AG company

In the UK, an April fool joke is revealed by shouting "April fool!" at the recipient, who becomes the "April fool". A study in the 1950s, by folklorists [Iona and Peter Opie](#), found that in the UK, and in countries whose traditions derived from the UK, the joking ceased at midday.^[11] A person playing a joke after midday is the "April fool" themselves.^[1] However, this practice has lapsed in more recent years.^[12]

In Scotland, April Fools' Day is traditionally called Hunt-the-Gowk Day ("gowk" is [Scots](#) for a cuckoo or a foolish person), although this name has fallen into disuse. The traditional prank is to ask someone to deliver a sealed message requesting help of some sort. In fact, the message reads "Dinna

laugh, dinna smile. Hunt the gowk another mile". The recipient, upon reading it, will explain he can only help if he first contacts another person, and sends the victim to this person with an identical message, with the same result.^[11]

In [Iran](#), jokes are played on the 13th day of the [Persian](#) new year ([Nowruz](#)), which falls on 1 April or 2 April. This day, celebrated as far back as 536 BC,^[13] is called [Sizdah Bedar](#) and is the oldest prank-tradition in the world still alive today; this fact has led many to believe that April Fools' Day has its origins in this tradition.^[14]

The 1 April tradition in France, [Romandy](#) and [French-speaking Canada](#) includes [poisson d'avril](#) (literally "April's fish"), attempting to attach a paper fish to the victim's back without being noticed. This is also widespread in other nations, such as Italy, where the term [Pesce d'aprile](#) (literally "April's fish") is also used to refer to any jokes done during the day. This custom also exists in certain areas of Belgium, including the province of [Antwerp](#). The [Flemish](#) tradition is for children to lock out their parents or teachers, only letting them in if they promise to bring treats the same evening or the next day.^[15]

In Poland, *prima aprilis* ("April 1" in [Latin](#)) is a day full of jokes; various hoaxes are prepared by people, media (which sometimes cooperate to make the "information" more credible) and even public institutions. Serious activities are usually avoided. This conviction is so strong that the anti-Turkish alliance with [Leopold I](#) signed on 1 April 1683, was backdated to 31 March.^[16]

April Fools' Day pranks ^[edit]

In 1957, the [BBC](#) pulled a prank, known as the [Swiss Spaghetti Harvest](#) prank, where they broadcast a fake video of Swiss farmers picking freshly-grown spaghetti. The BBC were later flooded with requests to purchase a spaghetti plant, forcing them to declare the video as a prank on the news the next day.^[17]

Other prank days in the world ^[edit]

In Denmark, 1 May is known as "Maj-kat", meaning "May-cat", and is also a joking day. 1 May is also celebrated in Sweden as an alternative joking day. When someone has been fooled in Sweden, to disclose that it was a joke, the fooler says the rhyme "april april din dumma sill, jag kan lura dig vart jag vill" ("April, April, you stupid herring, I can fool you to wherever I want") for April 1 jokes, or "maj maj måne, jag kan lura dig till Skåne" (May May moon, I can fool you into Scania) for May 1 jokes.

Both Danes and Swedes also celebrate April Fools' Day ("aprilsnar" in Danish). Pranks on 1 May, are much less frequent. Most Swedish and Danish news media outlets will publish exactly one false story on 1 April, for newspapers this will typically be a first-page article but not the top headline.^[18]

28 December is the equivalent day in Spain and [Ibero-America](#), which is also the Christian day of celebration of the "[Day of the Holy Innocents](#)". The Christian celebration is a holiday in its own right, a religious one, but the tradition of pranks is not, though the latter is observed yearly. After somebody plays a joke or a prank on somebody else, the joker usually cries out, in some regions of Ibero-America: "*Inocente palomita que te dejaste engañar*" ("*You innocent little dove that let yourself be fooled*"). In Mexico, the phrase is "*Inocente Para Siempre!*" which means "Innocent Forever!". In Argentina, the prankster says "Que la inocencia te valga!" (which roughly translates as a piece of advice on not to be as gullible as the pranked) In Spain, it is common to say just "*Inocente!*" (which in Spanish can mean "Innocent!", but also "Gullible!"). Nevertheless, on the Spanish island of [Minorca](#), "*Dia d'enganya*" ("Fooling day") is celebrated on 1 April because Menorca was a British possession during part of the 18th century.^[19]

See also ^[edit]

- [List of April Fool's Day jokes](#)
- [List of practical joke topics](#)
- [Veneralia](#)



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- Wainwright, Martin (2007). *The Guardian Book of April Fool's Day* . Aurum. ISBN 184513155X

External links [edit]

- "Top 100 April Fools' Day hoaxes of all time" . Museum of Hoaxes.
- "April Fools' Day On The Web: List of all known April Fools' Day Jokes websites from 2004 until present" .

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